

GOLDEN TREASURES IN SHATTERED CASKETS.

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Oration delivered at anniversary of Pierian Literary Society of Ashland College.

Unclasp the volume of a human life; turn back the leaves of time, until the first dim page is reached, and you will see that not all was gold that glittered in that pathway. He was charmed by the glittering gewgaws, but like the apples of Sodom, they turned to ashes in his very grasp. He was allured into paths of ills by the enchantments of "gilded loam or painted clay." He listened to the songs of the Sirens; but only by the most strenuous efforts, did he glide by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he must needs bear about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. He beheld the rainbow's lovely form, upon whose iridescent arch rest the floors of heaven. Ere he could point its radiant beauty, it had vanished amid the storm, fragile as a dream, transient as the dew.

He beheld a flower, "an angel of the grass," clad in Solomonic splendor, crowned with a circlet of dew; exhaling the balmy odors of nard and cassia. He plucked it, his flesh was torn by the thorns. Truly this earth is a grand creation to contemplate. How lightly row the fleecy clouds over the deep sea of heaven! How beautiful is Spring with crocuses and daffodils, and roses in her hands! How majestic are the mountains towering aloft, looking o'er half the world from their thrones of cloud!

But yet geologists tell us that within there is a living fire. Like a house ablaze in the basement, at any moment the flames to burst forth into uncontrollable violence.

"Things are not what they seem," and could we realize that truth, we would, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

Two poets in two distant ages were born to adorn Greece and England. "The first surpassed in loftiness of thought, in majesty the next." To both alike was darkness how profound. "Night, sable goddess, from her ebon throne, Stretched forth her leaden sceptre," while it was yet mid-day. Their idle orbs "bereft of light, their seeing did forget."

Homer, the greatest poet of antiquity, immortalized by his Iliad, of which Pope says, "It is a wild paradise, a copious nursery, which contains the seed and first productions of every kind, out of which

those who followed him have but selected some particular plants, each according to his fancy to cultivate and beautify."

And Milton, "whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart," who in his monument of epic genius stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty. To these two were intellects sublime, that soared above the clouds and plucked from the gardens of Paradise flowers of superior bloom and sweetness. Golden treasures, as it were, in shattered caskets.

If we could understand the timid little flower, we would know what God and man is. A floweret of a day has not blossomed in vain.

Its sweet fragrance in the air is its departing and ascending spirit, but by it the weary traveler catching a fresh gleam of hope takes heart again. The treasure within a little brown bulb, as it bursts the bonds of its uncouth casket and unfolds its alabaster petals, sheds an influence round it greater than thought can measure or tongue can tell.

There is a small portion of Divinity within us called the soul. It is a mere spark smoldering in the centre of the weight of clay. Fan it, and this spark of light becomes a radiant, burning, extinguishable flame. While the soul is imprisoned within a material casket, it must needs obey the laws of the prison, but the crumbling walls attest the feebleness of mortality, and as the poor house of clay wears to pieces, the soul spires onward and upward, until it breaks the seal of its shattered casket, and leaves it here,

"An empty sea shell—one

Out of which the pearl has gone."

Then will all the burial places of the memory give up their dead, and there will be no forgetting.

O, my soul, build for thee a more stately mansion! Let year after year behold the silent toil that reared a temple nobler than the last, then leave thy past year's dwelling for the new. And when thou hast outgrown this mortal shell,

"Fling wide your gates, O City of God!
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors!"

'Tis the soul that is our golden treasure and is it not a priceless pearl in a shattered casket?

The casket is,

"But a hut which thou art quitting,
Is a garment no more fitting,
Is a cage from which at last,
Like a hawk, thy soul shall pass.

Love thy inmate, not the room—
The wearer, not the garb—the plume
Of the falcon, not the bars
Which kept him from the splendid stars!"

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.—*Longfellow.*

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

A. B. GNAGEY.

Harriet Beecher Stowe died at her home in Hartford on Wednesday, July 1. She was the most widely known of American women, and it is not too much to say of her that, with the exception of a small number of men, including Washington, Lincoln and Grant, her fame reached farther than that of any other American. The people whom she instructed through "Uncle Tom's Cabin" were made up of readers in all countries and all languages. The story was read by almost every one of intelligence in this country, and in England. Within one year after its first appearance forty editions had been printed, and soon it was translated into more than twenty languages. In the United States the sale of the volume has never ceased, which means that the people have never quit reading her book. The people have seen it in every form possible, both in book form and on the stage, and they know Uncle Tom better than they do any other character in fiction. We may say that Mrs. Stowe was born to write "Uncle Tom's Cabin." There was in Mrs. Stowe, as in her great father and in her greater brother, not only the instinct to right that which was wrong, but the greater quality which personified the wrong and attacked it with every resource of the heart as well as of the intellect.

Mrs. Stowe was born in Litchfield, Conn., in the stirring days of 1812, and therefore she knew all about the simplicity and hardness of a New England parsonage. She devoted most of her time to books when a mere child from an instinct that in them she might find what her rich and aspiring nature needed. Among some of the volumes in which she lived, we find Scott's Novels, The Arabian Nights, and Don Quixote. These selections bring out in strong relief those interests in life which were her principal characteristics. When Mrs. Stowe was but twelve years of age, in a composition at school, she had answered the great question, "Can the immortality of the soul be proved by the light of nature?"

In 1832 her father became President of Lane Theological Seminary at Cincinnati. She went with him to this place, where four years later she married Professor Stowe. When the Stowes left Cincinnati for Maine the anti-slavery agitation was at its height. Mrs. Stowe lived near enough to the frontier line between slavery and freedom to enter personally into the great struggle then going on, and it was this that caused her to write a series of sketches which portrayed a slaveholding society as she understood it. The